



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH EXELON TO DISCUSS TWO PRELIMINARY INSPECTION FINDINGS AT PEACH BOTTOM

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with officials of Exelon Generation Company on Friday afternoon, August 23, to discuss two preliminary inspection findings of low to moderate safety significance at the Peach Bottom nuclear power plant. The two-unit plant is located in Peach Bottom Township, Pa., and operated by Exelon.

The regulatory conference will be held at 1:30 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC's Region I office, 475 Allendale Road in King of Prussia, Pa. The public is invited to observe the business portion of the meeting and will have an opportunity to ask questions of NRC staff before the meeting is adjourned.

Exelon requested the meeting to discuss its evaluation of the two preliminary findings. The first finding, which is preliminarily characterized as "white" -- an issue of low to moderate safety significance -- is associated with Exelon's inadequate critique of a February emergency preparedness exercise. Emergency preparedness exercises are held to identify performance and procedural deficiencies through a critique process. The exercises are designed to ensure that the company will take timely and appropriate corrective actions to prevent these problems from occurring during an actual emergency. To make safety drills effective, the plant staff's critiques of emergency preparedness drills must be thorough and self-critical.

The second finding, also characterized as "white," stems from an untimely "Alert" classification during an actual event in June. (The NRC uses several classifications for significant events at nuclear power plants, ranging from the least significant category of "Unusual Event," increasing to "Alert," "Site Area Emergency" and "General Emergency," the most significant.) On June 2, the carbon-dioxide fire-suppression system for the emergency diesel generator room unexpectedly discharged. It took the company 31 minutes to declare an Alert due to a toxic gas release into a vital structure. NRC regulations require that companies promptly classify emergency situations. Specifically, the identification and classification of emergencies should be accomplished within 15 minutes after emergency action levels are met.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with "green" and progressing to "white," "yellow" or "red." Information presented by the company at the Regulatory Conference will be used by the NRC staff, along with its inspection findings, to determine the final safety significance of the problems.

"White" inspection findings can lead to additional NRC inspections.

The details of the NRC inspection findings are discussed in Inspection Report 02-07, which is available online in the NRC's electronic reading room. This report -- with the accession number ML022000347 -- may be viewed in the NRC's ADAMS document system, accessible at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. The final significance determination will be available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/what-we-do/regulatory/enforcement/current.html#reactor.

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